

Housing and Community Development Office Annual Report FY 2003-2004 CD

Affordable Housing

Office of Housing & Community Development

The Office of Housing & Community Development's mission is to facilitate quality community development that will result in benefits to low and moderate income persons by providing for decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities. The office provides community planning, information resources and financial support for low to moderate income individuals, families, and organizations in a fair and equitable manner.

FY 2003-2004 Accomplishments-To-Date

- Received the town's first Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.(DHCD)
- Accepted the federal designation as an Entitlement community that will allow the town to receive \$774,000/year for low-moderate income projects and programs
- Contracted with the state to begin Phase I of the Roanoke-Lee Street Community Improvement (CDBG) Project
- Created the Office of Housing & Community Development to help plan, facilitate, and administer the town's new entitlement programs
- Partner with Community Housing Partners, a non-profit and federally designated Community-Based Development Organization, to assist with the Roanoke-Lee Street Project
- Develop and submit the town's Citizen Participation Plan, Five Year Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan for HUD approval.

Roanoke – Lee Street Neighborhood Comprehensive Community Development Grant

Phase II of the Roanoke-Lee project is the town's number one entitlement program. The project will rehabilitate approximately twenty houses and build over a dozen structures when it is completed, probably sometime in 2006. All tenants are required to meet HUD's Low-Moderate Income (LMI) qualifications. Public improvements include upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure, street lights, new sidewalks/curb and gutter, improved storm water drainage, and repaved streets. The project is estimated at \$3.5 million dollars in public/private improvements.

Consolidated Plan

The town completed a five year Consolidated Plan as part of the town's requirements in becoming an entitlement community. The Plan necessitated the development of a Citizen's Participation Plan and an Annual Action Plan while also serving as the community's strategic plan for housing and community development to serve identified low and moderate income needs. Primary needs identified in the plan include housing, transportation, child care, homelessness programs, economic development, and community development programs and projects.

The plan involved over 120 citizens in two open houses and a public hearing and hundreds of written comments were received, far more than in most communities. Over a dozen local agencies also provided information for the plan.

The plan is available in the Town Manager's Office, the Community Relations Office, online at www.blacksburg.gov/government/community_development/index.php or at the Housing & Community Development Office.

Housing Partnership of the NRV

This partnership of non-profit organizations expanded to include local governments, particularly the new entitlement communities of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Radford. Blacksburg's participation in this group has led to many new contacts that prove very useful in a variety of ways. Many calls to the Housing & Community Development Office are for short term or emergency needs that Town staff is not able to address. The Housing Partnership has provided a valuable support and information network to the town and the Consolidated Plan has identified funds beginning in 2005 to help many of these human service agencies.

Neighborhood Enhancement Program

The success of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program is highly noted through the partnerships that have developed within the community. Some of the Neighborhood Enhancement Programs partners are:

- VT Student Government Association - Big Event Town Wide Litter Collection (300 volunteers)
- VT Student Legal Services, Judicial Affairs, Alcohol Prevention Center – for habitual neighborhood nuisance concerns
- NRV Community Action - for neighbor assistance
- Montgomery County Health Department - for restaurants
- National Wildlife/Fisheries - non-domesticated animal nuisances
- VT Professional Business Writing - for literature and student analysis
- Town/Gown Community Relations Committee – monthly public meeting
- New River Valley Mediation Conflict Resolution Center – forwards non-town related conflicts in neighborhoods
- Department of Urban Planning – for student interns
- NRV Protein – translation of guidelines for restaurant grease for Spanish and Chinese establishments
- NRV Apartment Council – attend meeting to update them on NEP activities

Additionally, NEP maintains contact and support to staff within Town departments. Neighborhood planning, rental, zoning and property maintenance inspections are occasionally co-coordinated for maximum results.

The Nuisance Abatement element of the program was implemented as a means to consolidate response to complaints of basic nuisance code items such as weeds and debris, removal of abandoned vehicles, refuse and litter control, and other similar issues. In addition, the objective of the program is to move to a proactive enforcement process over time such that these violations are noted and enforcement pursued prior to staff receiving a complaint.

Projects initiated this year (2004): 2,837. Staff received 200 (7.0% of the total caseload) complaints from residents this past year. A total of 231 notices of violation were issued which resulted in a contractor being hired to abate 18 violations for a cost of approximately \$2,382.67.

Summary by Type of Violation

Description	No. Cases	Percent
Tall grass	284	10.0
Debris	654	23.1
Inoperable vehicles	150	5.3
Address numbering	21	0.7
Trash collection	1,183	41.7
Zoning violations (Forwarded to Zoning Inspector)	28	1.0
Property Maintenance (Forwarded to PM Official)	15	0.5
Snow Removal	419	14.8
Encroachments (started June 2004)	33	1.0
Miscellaneous (ponds, birds, site obstructions, traffic concerns)	50	1.8
TOTAL	2,837	100.0

Effective code enforcement is perhaps the most challenging goal to address with a positive approach. The process used by town staff is to: (a) visit a residence with a note to bring the concern to their attention and provide them a list of alternatives to resolve the issue themselves. (b) The residence is re-visited a second time 5 days later. If the issue has still not been addressed, then (c) a formal letter is mail to the owner and a deadline to abate the concern is noted. Should the deadline not be met, a contractor hired by Town staff abates the issue at the expense of the homeowner (i.e., mow the grass, haul of debris, and the like). The town is then reimbursed the cost of that service.